

Aurora downtown plan ready for a vote

 chicagotribune.com/suburbs/aurora-beacon-news/news/ct-abn-aurora-plan-st-1110-20171109-story.html

Steve Lord

The Aurora City Council is set to vote on an upgrade of the downtown master plan that is more than two years in the making.

Aldermen will vote on adopting the plan revisions at the 7 p.m. City Council meeting on Nov. 14 in the council chambers, City Hall, 44 E. Downer Place.

The new downtown master plan is an upgrade of the Seize the Future Plan done in 2005 for downtown. The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning awarded a technical assistance grant to Aurora to help local planners upgrade the plan.

"This project, to have teeth, needs to be implemented," said Lindsay Bayley, the agency's project manager for the upgrade.

The plan has been through several public hearings and gained input from an online survey and survey locations throughout the city for almost two years. Bayley said this week the first online survey had more than 700 completed surveys, and the second one more than 900 responses.

Planning agency officials also got input from taking part in city events, such as First Fridays, alderman ward meetings, city advisory board meetings and meetings with affected organizations, such as Aurora Downtown.

The plan contains a number of recommendations. Many of them deal with aesthetic improvements and identifying gateways to and from downtown. There is one recommendation that does say the city should "develop stronger visual and physical links to the riverfront."

The plan includes recommendations such as promoting and cultivating the creative, cultural identity of downtown and identifying and activating vacant spaces.

Adoption of the plan was first discussed by the council's Planning and Development Committee about a month ago, but aldermen at that committee held off sending it to the Committee of the Whole for two weeks.

They wanted to see more mention of the downtown Riverwalk and its potential, along with the Fox River, for economic development. Aldermen also wanted to mention the importance of connecting the downtown to the city's fiber optic network.

Ald. Michael Saville, 6th Ward, told aldermen at the Committee of the Whole this week he thought those had been addressed in the plan.

Bayley said after the council adopts the new upgrade, planning agency officials will keep advising the city on implementation up to two years afterward, "helping out as we can."

